

§ 7A-173. Suspension; removal; reinstatement.

(a) A magistrate may be suspended from performing the duties of his office by the chief district judge of the district court district in which his county is located, or removed from office by the senior regular resident superior court judge of, or any regular superior court judge holding court in, the district or set of districts as defined in G.S. 7A-41.1(a) in which the county is located. Grounds for suspension or removal are the same as for a judge of the General Court of Justice.

(b) Suspension from performing the duties of the office may be ordered upon filing of sworn written charges in the office of clerk of superior court for the county in which the magistrate resides. If the chief district judge, upon examination of the sworn charges, finds that the charges, if true, constitute grounds for removal, he may enter an order suspending the magistrate from performing the duties of his office until a final determination of the charges on the merits. During suspension the salary of the magistrate continues.

(c) If a hearing, with or without suspension, is ordered, the magistrate against whom the charges have been made shall be given immediate written notice of the proceedings and a true copy of the charges, and the matter shall be set by the chief district judge for hearing before the senior regular resident superior court judge or a regular superior court judge holding court in the district or set of districts as defined in G.S. 7A-41.1(a) in which the county is located. The hearing shall be held in a county within the district or set of districts not less than 10 days nor more than 30 days after the magistrate has received a copy of the charges. The hearing shall be open to the public. All testimony offered shall be recorded. At the hearing the superior court judge shall receive evidence, and make findings of fact and conclusions of law. If he finds that grounds for removal exist, he shall enter an order permanently removing the magistrate from office, and terminating his salary. If he finds that no such grounds exist, he shall terminate the suspension, if any.

(d) A magistrate may appeal from an order of removal to the Court of Appeals on the basis of error of law by the superior court judge. Pending decision of the case on appeal, the magistrate shall not perform any of the duties of his office. If, upon final determination, he is ordered reinstated, either by the appellate division or by the superior court on remand, his salary shall be restored from the date of the original order of removal. (1965, c. 310, s. 1; 1967, c. 108, s. 4; 1973, c. 148, ss. 3, 4; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1037, s. 18.)